

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04
SIL-01 /063 W
-----105833 312122Z /65

O R 311658Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4577
INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PINS, PINT, GJ

SUBJ: GRENADA BY-ELECTION TO ADD TO CURRENT TENSION

REF: BRIDGETOWN 0044

1. GRENADA RADIO HAS ANNOUNCED THAT PRIMIN ERIC GAIRY HAS SET ASIDE MARCH 1 AS THE DATE OF A SPECIAL BY-ELECTION TO CHOOSE A SUCCESSOR TO INNOCENT BELMAR IN THE ST. ANDREWS NORTHWEST CONSTITUENCY. BELMAR WAS SHOT DEAD ON JANUARY 4 (REFTEL). NEITHER GAIRY'S RULING GRENADA UNITED LABOUR PARTY(GULP) NOR THE OPPOSITION PEOPLES ALLIANCE HAVE NAMED CANDIDATES AS YET.

2. THE ST. ANDREWS NORTHWEST CONSTITUENCY HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN GAIRY TERRITORY. DESPITE BEING LABELED BY THE 1974 DUFFUS COMMISSION AS UNFIT TO HOLD PUBLIC OFFICE, BELMAR EASILY WON A SEAT IN PARLIAMENT FROM ST. ANDREWS
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NORTHWEST IN THE DECEMBER 1976 GENERAL ELECTIONS BY MASSING MORE THAN 60 PER CENT OF THE VOTE.

3. GRENADA REMAINS TENSE IN THE WAKE OF THE BELMAR SHOOTING. POLICE COMMISSIONER OSBERT JAMES ISSUED A NOTICE ON JANUARY 11 PROHIBITING INDEFINITELY THE USE OF LOUDSPEAKERS TO EITHER PUBLICIZE MEETINGS OR AT GATHERINGS OF ANY KIND.

GRENADA CIVIL SERVANTS HAVE THREATENED TO GO ON STRIKE BEGINNING FEBRUARY 6 IF THERE IS NOT FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF SALARY INCREASES AS RECOMMENDED BY A 1977 STUDY COMMISSION. PRIMIN GAIRY, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAS ATTEMPTED TO GET CERTAIN GROUPS OF CIVIL SERVANTS TO AGREE TO GREATLY REDUCED INCREASES BY STATING FLATLY THAT THE GOG JUST DOESN'T HAVE THE MONEY AND HAS LITTLE PROSPECT OF OBTAINING IT IN THE FUTURE. THE OPPOSITION NEW JEWEL MOVEMENT HAS CHARGED THAT GAIRY HAS PLACED GRENADA IN AN INFORMAL STATE OF EMERGENCY AND HAS WORKED TO STRENGTHEN THE RESOLVE OF THE CIVIL SERVANTS BY CHARGING THAT THE PRIMIN IS USING DIVIDE AND CONQUER TACTICS BY APPROACHING THE POLICE, NURSES, TEACHERS, ETC. SEPARATELY.

4. NEW JEWEL LEADER AND LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN GRENADA, MAURICE BISHOP, USED A RECENT TRIP TO TRINIDAD ON LEGAL BUSINESS TO SUGGEST TO NEWSMEN THERE THAT PRIMIN GAIRY WAS EXTREMELY VULNERABLE AT THIS TIME DUE TO THE PAY QUESTION AND A FALLING MAJORITY IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. THE LATTER POINT INCLUDES THE SERIOUS ILLNESS OF FINANCE MINISTER GEORGE HOSTEN WHO IS NOW IN THE U.S. (BRIDGETOWN 0141 NOTAL) IN ADDITION TO THE BELMAR DEATH WHICH HAS LEFT GAIRY'S FUNCTIONING MAJORITY IN THE HOUSE ONLY SEVEN TO SIX.

5. COMMENT. GAIRY IS NOT IN IMMEDIATE TROUBLE BECAUSE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF THE VOTING STRENGTH THAT HE CAN MUSTER IN THE HOUSE. THE PRIMIN UNDOUBTEABLY WILL SIMPLY REFUSE TO CONVENE THE HOUSE IN THE EVENT ANY PARLIAMENTARY CHALLENGE IS BEING PREPARED. WHILE THE GULP SHOULD BE ABLE TO HOLD THE ST. ANDREWS NORTHWEST SEAT, THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN ITSELF WILL UNDOUBTABLY ADD TO THE TENSIONS ON THE ISLAND. THE NEW JEWEL MOVEMENT WILL ATTEMPT TO MAKE THE BY-ELECTION A REFERENDUM ON THE PERFORMANCE OF GAIRY SINCE DECEMBER 1976, BUT GAIRY WILL BE ABLE TO USE BELMAR'S MURDER TO HIS ADVANTAGE IN EXPLAINING THE NECESSITY OF INCREASED SECURITY MEASURES AND OTHER PRECAUTIONS. EXACTLY WHAT COURSE THE CAMPAIGNING WILL TAKE WILL DEPEND TO A LARGE EXTENT ON THE WILLINNESS OF THE GAIRY GOVT TO ALLOW THE USE OF LOUDSPEAKERS AT PUBLIC MEETINGS, PARTICULARLY THOSE OF THE NEW JEWEL SINCE OPPOSITION ACCESS TO THE RADIO AND PRINT MEDIA IS VERY DIFFICULT. SHOULD GAIRY'S GULP RETAIN THE SEAT LITTLE IN GRENADA WILL HAVE CHANGED. SHOULD THE OPPOSITION WIN GAIRY WILL STILL RULE IN THE HOUSE BY EIGHT TO SEVEN, BUT THE OPPOSITION WILL HAVE GAINED FURTHER MOMENTUM. ORTIZ

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SPECIAL ELECTIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BRIDGE00284
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780046-0798
Format: TEL
From: BRIDGETOWN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978015/aaaaadwh.tel
Line Count: 114
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e9013ce2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BRIDGETOWN 44
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3754856
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GRENADA BY-ELECTION TO ADD TO CURRENT TENSION
TAGS: PINS, PINT, GJ, (BELMAR, INNOCENT)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e9013ce2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014